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A NOTABLE WOMAN FLOWER PAINTER.

A PECULIAR and remarkably interesting exhibition of pictures was opened in June at Kew Gardens, London. This exhibition is a permanent one, both the pictures exhibited and the unique building which holds them being a gift to the nation from the accomplished artist and traveller, Miss Marianne North, and it forms a noble monument to feminine energy, bravery, and generosity, as well as talent. All of the six hundred oil sketches shown are from the brush of the donor, and nearly all are strictly flower paintings, the result of many years' work among the flora of the tropics in Australia, North and South America, India, Japan, Ceylon, Jamaica, Teneriffe, and elsewhere. So important have been this lady's services to actual science while pursuing her art in wild regions remote from civilization that the British Government provided her with official recommendations to its consuls and residents abroad, that they might assist her transit through any untravelled region in which she might find it desirable to paint.

It was not until the seventeenth century that the branch of art to which this gifted lady devotes her talent came to have honorable position in the sphere of human activity. Prior to that time it had been counted as mechanical repetition rather than artistic interpretation of natural forms, and in its proper place only in decorating silk and woollen stuffs and furniture. Even the decorative artists themselves seemed to look upon it as inferior to other forms of ornamentation, and went to Ovid and classical myths for their designs rather than to blooming nature, so that not a flower as central purpose appears on the cassoni and mobilier of the Italian Renaissance. It is to the seventeenth century and to Dutch masters—and mistresses—that flower painting owes its recognition as art. Several artists of that century gained great fame, and their works now sell almost as dearly as if they were Last Judgments and Crucifixions instead of butterflies and roses. In this century too, for almost the first time in the history of art, women became celebrated in a pursuit which not the most acrid carper against "female emancipation" can condemn as unwomanly. Among these celebrated women, as celebrated as any of them, and whose pictures are immensely sought and prized by collectors, appears one who seems almost the artistic antetype of Miss North. This was Sibylla Maria Merian, born at Frankfort in 1647. Her step-father was a flower painter and taught her the rudiments of her art. Like Miss North, her inclination led her to the study of natural history, and, like Miss North, she painted insects and flowers with a precision and taste never excelled by any painter whatever. She usually painted in water-color on vellum, and was particularly fond of caterpillars and butterflies in all the changes they undergo. Her zeal in her art led her to undertake

a voyage to Surinam for the sake of painting the flowers and insects of that climate—a journey which, wonderful in its time, seems nothing now compared to the leagues of land and sea traversed in the same intent by this nineteenth century artist of whom we write.

In some respects the English woman excels the German one. Her color, presented in wonderful masses of rare orchids and rhododendrons, wild flowers of Simla, Himalayan poppies and Australian flame trees, Indian bamboo, braken and palm forests and autumn foliage of Massachusetts, is much richer than Madame Merian's, with a more velvety softness where Maria Merian is brilliantly smooth and cold. She has peculiar surface softness and dryness in her textures which recall pastel, although by no means to the detriment of

lages among the mountain clouds; her feathery cascades of the Yosemite, or even yellow wastes of Arizona sands, without wishing to sell all that they have and wander away into those far, strange, alluring lands. Miss North sailed again from England last June. Her destination was the Cape of Good Hope, where she intends to continue her delightful occupation of painting for the "Marianne North Gallery" the flowers of all climes.

The exhibition room containing this wonderful collection deserves more than a notice en passant for the hints it gives in the way of household decoration. It is fifty feet by twenty-five in dimensions, and is lighted by a row of windows above just under the roof, after the Greek manner of lighting buildings. Below this

row of windows—which, by the way, are separated from each other by floral panels painted by Miss North—is a frieze of dull Pompeian red, painted with conventional forms in black outline. Beneath the frieze to the wainscoting, or dado, the space is completely filled with cabinet paintings so well arranged that no wall space shows between them anywhere. The dado is of foreign and native woods highly polished, set in long, narrow panels, each separated from its neighbor by a thin raised rim of black. The three doors are also black, the panels exquisitely painted with flowers and each panel delicately rimmed or outlined with gold.

The door casings are gilded as frames wide and massive, to the pictures of the doors. These frames, or casings, are decorated with floral designs, graceful, flowing and effective on their backgrounds of dim gold. One of these door-casing decorations is a drooping design of the long variegated leaves of the foliage plant. Others are vines of various kinds, accentuated at corners and centres by decorative flowers, such as large white chrysanthemums, wide white lilies, and white or gay tropical flowers.

The "Marianne North Gallery" is a permanent exhibition, free, and open almost every day of the year. No American with a love of art and nature should think of leaving London without having paid a visit to it.

M. B. W.



"BEHIND THE WHEEL-HOUSE." BY HENRY BACON.

ORIGINAL SKETCH FOR THE PAINTING.

those textures, and every object has the scrupulous exactitude of Maria Merian, with more sense of largeness and freedom of treatment.

In the few small landscapes with which the wonderfully rich, beautiful, and curious exhibition is scattered there is a slight want of force which critics, perhaps, might call "feminine." Certainly, however, they are imaginative work—literal as they are—in at least one particular, their effect upon the imagination of the spectator; for few can look upon her wide, cool balconies of Indian villas with quiver of tropic fervor in the golden atmosphere, and background of purple, Orient sea; her Jamaica bays with coral reefs showing beneath the limpid waters; her Japanese vil-

NOT long ago we called attention to the discovery by a French artist in London of a preparation for making pigments indelible for painting in water colors on tapestry, silk or plush. We now read in a London journal of a new medium for painting with oil colors upon textiles, invented by a gentleman resident at Florence, and designated "the Adolphi Process." According to what is stated, the employment of a certain medium with ordinary oil colors renders them so pliant that the material upon which the picture has been executed, when the colors have become perfectly dry, may be rolled up into very small space indeed without injury to the work. The discovery is said to be "under consideration in very high quarters."